Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for assessing the identity of an individual, said method comprising the steps of:

accepting input from an individual;

attributing at least one user group to the individual; and

repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is assessed.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said repeating step comprises repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is determined.

3. The method according to Claim 2, wherein said step of repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is determined comprises performing a gradual determination of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

4. The method according to Claim 2, wherein said step of repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is determined comprises performing a partial determination of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

5. The method according to Claim 2, wherein said repeating step comprises attributing to the individual at least one user group that is distinct from any user group previously attributed.

6. The method according to Claim 5, whereby the individual is identified by narrowing down a quantity of possible individuals into smaller user groups.

7. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said attributing step comprises characterizing the identity of an individual as a vector of similarity scores with respect to given user groups.

8. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said repeating step comprises repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is authenticated.

9. The method according to Claim 8, wherein said step of repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is authenticated comprises performing a

gradual authentication of an identity claim of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

10. The method according to Claim 8, wherein said step of repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is authenticated comprises performing a partial authentication of an identity claim of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

11. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said repeating step comprises performing at least a partial assessment of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

12. The method according to Claim 11, wherein:

said repeating step further comprises the step of performing real time data retrieval; and

said step of performing real time data retrieval comprises employing the issued cues to narrow down a database to be searched.

13. The method according to Claim 11, wherein:

said repeating step further comprises the step of performing real time discovery of the individual; and

said step of performing real time discovering comprises employing the issued cues to narrow down user models which represent potential users to be scored.

14. The method according to Claim 11, wherein:

said repeating step further comprises the step of performing real time authentication of the individual; and

said step of performing real time authentication comprises employing the issued cues to narrow down relevant imposter models which represent potential false users.

15. An apparatus for assessing the identity of an individual, said apparatus comprising:

an arrangement for accepting input from an individual; and

an arrangement for attributing at least one user group to the individual;

said attributing arrangement being adapted to repeat the attributing until the identity of the individual is assessed.

16. The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to repeat the attributing until the identity of the individual is determined.

17. The apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform a gradual determination of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

18. The apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform a partial determination of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

19. The apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to attribute to the individual at least one user group that is distinct from any user group previously attributed.

20. The apparatus according to Claim 19, whereby the individual is identified by narrowing down a quantity of possible individuals into smaller user groups.

21. The apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to characterize the identity of an individual as a vector of similarity scores with respect to given user groups.

22. The apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to repeat the attributing until the identity of the individual is authenticated.

23. The apparatus according to Claim 22, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform a gradual authentication of an identity claim of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

24. The apparatus according to Claim 22, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform a partial authentication of an identity claim of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

25. The apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform at least a partial assessment of the identity of the individual via issuing a stream of cues over time, each of said cues being indicative of one or more user groups to which the individual belongs with a given degree of confidence.

26. The apparatus according to Claim 25, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform real time data retrieval, wherein the issued cues are employed to narrow down a database to be searched.

27. The apparatus according to Claim 25, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform real time discovery of the individual, wherein the issued cues are employed to narrow down user models which represent potential users to be scored.

28. The apparatus according to Claim 25, wherein said attributing arrangement is adapted to perform real time authentication of the individual, wherein the issued cues are employed to narrow down relevant imposter models which represent potential false users.

29. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for assessing the identity of an individual, said method comprising the steps of:

accepting input from an individual;

attributing at least one user group to the individual; and

repeating said attributing step until the identity of the individual is assessed.